

Federal Trade Commission

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paint and to subscribe to the views presented previously.

Example 2: A television advertisement portrays a woman seated at a desk on which rest five unmarked electric typewriters. An announcer says "We asked Mrs. X, an executive secretary for over ten years, to try these five unmarked typewriters and tell us which one she liked best."

The advertisement portrays the secretary typing on each machine, and then picking the advertiser's brand. The announcer asks her why, and Mrs. X gives her reasons. Assuming that consumers would perceive this presentation as a "blind" test, this endorsement would probably not represent that Mrs. X actually uses the advertiser's machines in her work. In addition, the endorsement may also be required to meet the standards of Guide 3 on Expert Endorsements.

[Guide 1]

[45 FR 3872, Jan. 18, 1980]

§ 255.2 Consumer endorsements.

(a) An advertisement employing an endorsement reflecting the experience of an individual or a group of consumers on a central or key attribute of the product or service will be interpreted as representing that the endorser's experience is representative of what consumers will generally achieve with the advertised product in actual, albeit variable, conditions of use. Therefore, unless the advertiser possesses and relies upon adequate substantiation for this representation, the advertisement should either clearly and conspicuously disclose what the generally expected performance would be in the depicted circumstances or clearly and conspicuously disclose the limited applicability of the endorser's experience to what consumers may generally expect to achieve. The Commission's position regarding the acceptance of disclaimers or disclosures is described in the preamble to these Guides published in the FEDERAL REGISTER on January 18, 1980.

(b) Advertisements presenting endorsements by what are represented, directly or by implication, to be "actual consumers" should utilize actual consumers, in both the audio and video or clearly and conspicuously disclose that the persons in such advertisements are not actual consumers of the advertised product.

(c) Claims concerning the efficacy of any drug or device as defined in the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. 55, shall not be made in lay endorsements unless (1) the advertiser has adequate scientific substantiation for such claims and (2) the claims are not inconsistent with any determination that has been made by the Food and Drug Administration with respect to the drug or device that is the subject of the claim.

Guide 2, Example 1: An advertisement presents the endorsement of an owner of one of the advertiser's television sets. The consumer states that she has needed to take the set to the shop for repairs only one time during her 2-year period of ownership and the costs of servicing the set to date have been under \$10.00. Unless the advertiser possesses and relied upon adequate substantiation for the implied claim that such performance reflects that which a significant proportion of consumers would be likely to experience, the advertiser should include a disclosure that either states clearly and conspicuously what the generally expectable performance would be or clearly and conspicuously informs consumers that the performance experienced by the endorser is not what they should expect to experience. The mere disclosure that "not all consumers will get this result" is insufficient because it can imply that while all consumers cannot expect the advertised results, a substantial number can expect them. [See the cross reference in Guide 2(a) regarding the acceptability of disclaimers or disclosures.]

Example 2: An advertiser presents the results of a poll of consumers who have used the advertiser's cake mixes as well as their own recipes. The results purport to show that the majority believed that their families could not tell the difference between the advertised mix and their own cakes baked from scratch. Many of the consumers are actually pictured in the advertisement along with relevant, quoted portions of their statements endorsing the product. This use of the results of a poll or survey of consumers probably represents a promise to consumers that this is the typical result that ordinary consumers can expect from the advertiser's cake mix.

Example 3: An advertisement purports to portray a "hidden camera" situation in a crowded cafeteria at breakfast time. A spokesperson for the advertiser asks a series of actual patrons of the cafeteria for their spontaneous, honest opinions of the advertiser's recently introduced breakfast cereal. Even though the words "hidden camera" are not displayed on the screen, and even though none of the actual patrons is specifically identified during the advertisement, the net

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impression conveyed to consumers may well be that these are actual customers, and not actors. If actors have been employed, this fact should be disclosed.

[Guide 2]

[45 FR 3872, Jan. 18, 1980]

§ 255.3 Expert endorsements.

(a) Whenever an advertisement represents, directly or by implication, that the endorser is an expert with respect to the endorsement message, then the endorser's qualifications must in fact give him the expertise that he is represented as possessing with respect to the endorsement.

(b) While the expert may, in endorsing a product, take into account factors not within his expertise (e.g., matters of taste or price), his endorsement must be supported by an actual exercise of his expertise in evaluating product features or characteristics with respect to which he is expert and which are both relevant to an ordinary consumer's use of or experience with the product and also are available to the ordinary consumer. This evaluation must have included an examination or testing of the product at least as extensive as someone with the same degree of expertise would normally need to conduct in order to support the conclusions presented in the endorsement. Where, and to the extent that, the advertisement implies that the endorsement was based upon a comparison such comparison must have been included in his evaluation; and as a result of such comparison, he must have concluded that, with respect to those features on which he is expert and which are relevant and available to an ordinary consumer, the endorsed product is at least equal overall to the competitors' products. Moreover, where the net impression created by the endorsement is that the advertised product is superior to other products with respect to any such feature or features, then the expert must in fact have found such superiority.

Example 1: An endorsement of a particular automobile by one described as an "engineer" implies that the endorser's professional training and experience are such that he is well acquainted with the design and performance of automobiles. If the endorser's field is, for example, chemical engineering, the endorsement would be deceptive.

Example 2: A manufacturer of automobile parts advertises that its products are approved by the "American Institute of Science." From its very name, consumers would infer that the "American Institute of Science" is a bona fide independent testing organization with expertise in judging automobile parts and that, as such, it would not approve any automobile part without first testing its efficacy by means of valid scientific methods. Even if the American Institute of Science is such a bona fide expert testing organization, as consumers would expect, the endorsement may nevertheless be deceptive unless the Institute has conducted valid scientific tests of the advertised products and the test results support the endorsement message.

Example 3: A manufacturer of a non-prescription drug product represents that its product has been selected in preference to competing products by a large metropolitan hospital. The hospital has selected the product because the manufacturer, unlike its competitors, has packaged each dose of the product separately. This package form is not generally available to the public. Under the circumstances, the endorsement would be deceptive because the basis for the choice of the manufacturer's product, convenience of packaging, is neither relevant nor available to consumers.

Example 4: The president of a commercial "home cleaning service" states in a television advertisement that the service uses a particular brand of cleanser in its business. Since the cleaning service's professional success depends largely upon the performance of the cleansers it uses, consumers would expect the service to be expert with respect to judging cleansing ability, and not be satisfied using an inferior cleanser in its business when it knows of a better one available to it. Accordingly, the cleaning service's endorsement must at least conform to those consumer expectations. The service must, of course, actually use the endorsed cleanser. Additionally, on the basis of its expertise, it must have determined that the cleansing ability of the endorsed cleanser is at least equal (or superior, if such is the net impression conveyed by the advertisement) to that of competing products with which the service has had experience and which remain reasonably available to it. Since in this example, the cleaning service's president makes no mention that the endorsed cleanser was "chosen," "selected," or otherwise evaluated in side-by-side comparisons against its competitors, it is sufficient if the service has relied solely upon its accumulated experience in evaluating cleansers without having to have performed side-by-side or scientific comparisons.